

USFK Safety Gram



16-05

21 December 2015

Protect Your Hands from Hazards

You probably take your hands for granted until you have an injury. Then you'll know just how difficult life can be without the full use of your hands.

In the workplace there are many hazards to your hand safety. Equipment which cuts and crushes materials can also mangle hands. There are rough surfaces which can scrape the skin. Hot and cold materials can cause thermal burns. Chemicals can corrode the skin or enter the body through the skin and cause poisoning. Infectious materials can cause disease. Electrical current which contacts the skin can cause fatal shocks. Other types of hand injuries are caused over a period of time -- by impact, strain, or vibration.

Many styles of glove are available for different jobs. To protect yourself against hand hazards, it is important to select the right kind of Personal Protective Equipment such as gloves. Ask your safety supervisor for guidance in choosing and fitting gloves.



Here is just a small sampling of the choices you have for gloves in some common work environments:

- ♦ **Cold Weather.** Gloves made of leather, insulated plastic or rubber, wool or cotton are usually worn.
- ♦ **Working With Chemicals and Fluids.** Natural rubber, neoprene and rubber are the most common materials these protective gloves are made of. Check the chemical's Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) to find out the requirements for these kinds of safety gloves. If you are unsure of what the MSDS says, ask your supervisor for help.
- ♦ **Cuts or Sharp Edges.** Reinforced heavy rubber, heavy leather gloves, Kevlar gloves or metal mesh gloves are a common choice when working with equipment that could cause serious cuts or have sharp edges. In lighter industrial settings, perhaps rubber, plastic, leather or cotton gloves may be all you need.
- ♦ **Electricity.** Rubber-insulating gloves tested for protection to a certain voltage are a good choice. Besides gloves, all other precautions should be used.
- ♦ **Heat.** Depending on how high the temperature, choices ranging from Kevlar to heat resistant leather gloves could provide the best protection.
- ♦ **Perspiration.** Cotton gloves offer the best protection if you tend to get sweaty palms while you are working.
- ♦ **Radiation.** Lead-lined rubber, plastic or leather gloves are common choices in this situation.

Besides wearing the right Personal Protective Equipment for your hands, there are some other things you can do to maintain hand safety on the job:

- ♦ Use care when working around moving equipment, as well as power or hand tools. Use machine guards correctly to prevent contact with moving parts or stock.
- ♦ Certain injuries can develop over a period of time. They are caused by repetitive strain, or by repeated impact or vibration. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is a common example of such an injury. It occurs when the worker performs the same hand motions all day, as in the case of a computer keyboard operator or an assembly worker. To help to prevent these injuries, keep your hands and wrists in a comfortable "neutral" position. Take frequent short rest breaks to relax your hands and wrists. Use tools which are specially designed to prevent repetitive strain and impact.



Your hands make it possible for you to work, so take good care of them!

